A 3100-2 p

Economic Note

Employment, starting salaries, and educational indebtedness of 1986 graduates of US veterinary medical colleges

In cooperation with US colleges of veterinary medicine, the AVMA conducted its annual survey of the graduating classes of veterinary medicine in spring 1986. The primary purpose of the survey was to secure data on veterinary graduates' employment, salaries, and educational indebtedness. Of the 2,119 US graduates, 1,417 responded to the survey, a response rate of 67%.

Employment and income

At the time of the survey, 78% of the responding graduates had received at least one employment offer. The median number of offers received was 2 per graduate. At the time of the survey, 67% of the graduates had accepted positions for employment upon graduation.

Regarding the graduates who had accepted employment, 78% had accepted positions as employees in private practice (Tables 1 and 2). Mean starting salaries are reported for 782 graduates who indicated annual starting salaries for full-time employment. For graduates taking positions as private practice employees, the average starting salary was $21,205. This represents a 1.2% increase over the 1985 starting salary of $20,954 for private practice employees.[1]

Specifically, 36.1% entered small animal exclusive practice at an average annual salary of $21,620, up 0.9% from 1985; 5.4% entered equine predominant practice at an average annual salary of $21,125, up 2.0% from 1985. Also, 8.1% entered large animal predominant practice and 1.0% entered large animal exclusive practice, at respective annual salaries of $20,731 and $21,900, both up 1.0% from 1985. Fifteen percent entered mixed animal practice at an average salary of $20,487, up 1.0% from 1985. An additional 5.0% of the respondents reported they would be self-employed in private practice, with an expected average salary of $23,272.

Less than 2% of the graduates accepted positions with the federal government and the military service. Average starting salaries were $23,500 and $25,736, respectively. One respondent entering state/local government reported a salary of $28,560. Two graduates entering the industry sector reported an average salary of $28,500.

In the academic sector, less

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Table 1—Types of employment and starting incomes of a large sample of 1986 US veterinary medical college graduates

	Percentage of graduates	Average starting salary (No.)	Average additional compensation expected in 1st year (No.)
Large animal exclusive	1.0	$21,900 (9)	... ...
Large animal predominant	8.1	20,731 (65)	$2,603 (34)
Mixed animal	15.5	20,487 (120)	2,755 (68)
Small animal predominant	11.7	21,173 (99)	2,882 (60)
Small animal exclusive	36.1	21,620 (284)	2,516 (174)
Equine predominant	5.4	21,125 (48)	3,868 (25)
University	0.9	15,833 (6)	... ...
Federal government	0.3	23,500 (2)*	... ...
Military service	1.5	25,736 (11)†	2,400 (4)
State/local government	0.2	28,560 (1)	... ...
Industry/commercial	0.3	28,500 (2)	... ...
Advanced study	13.2	15,186 (10b)	2,792 (24)
Self-employed	5.0	23,272 (22)	... ...
Other	0.8	18,300 (7)	6,156 (9)
	100 (914)	$20,478 (782)‡	$2,824 (406)

*Starting salary for federal government employment of veterinarians with no experience, no advanced degree other than the DVM, and not in the top 25% of their graduating class was $21,804 (GS 9, step 1). †Starting salary for military employment for veterinarians who are single, with no prior military service, including base pay, subsistence and quarters allowance, and veterinary special pay was $26,025. ‡Of the 914 graduates reporting employment, 782 graduates reported their annual starting salary for full-time employment.

Table 2—1986 starting salaries of 782 US veterinary medical college graduates, by type of employment

	LAE	LAP	MA	SAP	SAE	EP	U	FG	MS	SLG	IC	AS	SE	Other	Total
$11,000 or less	...	...	1	2	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	7	1	2	15
$11,001 to $13,000	...	3	...	...	1	5	1	...	...	...	...	15	...	...	25
$13,001 to $15,000	...	...	4	1	5	3	2	...	...	...	...	47	...	...	62
$15,001 to $17,000	2	...	1	1	8	1	1	...	...	...	...	21	...	...	35
$17,001 to $19,000	1	13	25	17	24	8	2	...	...	...	...	9	3	...	102
$19,001 to $21,000	...	21	52	29	81	8	...	...	1	...	...	3	5	2	202
$21,001 to $23,000	2	18	20	26	90	8	...	1	3	...	1	2	3	1	175
$23,001 to $25,000	3	8	15	16	59	9	...	1	3	...	...	1	5	1	121
$25,001 to $27,000	...	2	2	3	8	4	...	...	1	...	...	...	1	...	21
$27,001 to $29,000	1	...	...	1	3	...	...	...	2	1	...	...	...	...	8
$29,001 to $31,000	...	...	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3	...	5
$31,001 to $33,000	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
More than $33,000	...	...	...	...	2	2	...	...	1	...	1	1	1	1	9
Total	9	65	120	99	284	48	6	2	11	1	2	106	22	7	782

LAE = Large animal exclusive; LAP = Large animal predominant; MA = Mixed animal; SAP = Small animal predominant; SAE = Small animal exclusive; EP = Equine predominant; U = University; FG = Federal government; MS = Military service; SLG = State/local government; IC = Industrial/commercial; AS = Advanced study; SE = Self-employed.

*Table 3—Educational debt of 1986 US veterinary medical college graduates**

Debt ($)	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulative frequency† (%)
0	18.2%	100.0%
1 to 5,000	7.3	81.8
5,001 to 10,000	7.8	74.5
10,001 to 15,000	8.7	66.7
15,001 to 20,000	12.3	58.0
20,001 to 25,000	16.5	45.7
25,001 to 30,000	11.4	29.2
30,001 to 35,000	6.1	17.8
35,001 to 40,000	4.2	11.7
40,001 to 45,000	2.9	7.5
45,001 to 50,000	2.3	4.6
More than 50,000	2.3	2.3

*Total respondents = 1,417. †Cumulative frequency percentages represent the percentage of graduates with debt in excess of the corresponding next lowest debt interval; eg, 58% of the graduates reported debt in excess of $15,000.

than 1% took university positions (research or teaching) at an average salary of $15,833, and 13.2% would begin advanced study (graduate degree, internship, or residency program) at an average salary of $15,186.

All graduates were asked if they would receive compensation in addition to their salary in their first year of employment. One half of the graduates who reported starting salaries indicated that they would receive additional compensation within the first year. Most likely, the additional pay represents a percentage of gross income, a percentage of emergency fees, a bonus, a salary raise, or other financial compensation. Most graduates anticipating additional pay expected amounts ranging from $2,000 to $4,000.

Educational debt

All graduates were requested to indicate what their total educational indebtedness would be upon graduation. For the 1,159 graduates (82%) who indicated having educational debt, the average debt was $23,420, up 5.2% from 1985. The relative frequency distribution showed that 58% of 1986 graduates, compared with 42% of 1985 graduates and 36% of 1984 graduates, had educational debt in excess of $20,000 (Table 3).[1,2]

Average educational debt also was determined by type of employment graduates accepted at the time of the survey (Table 4). This distribution suggested that graduates with high debt chose private practice employment.

References

1. Wise JK, Raef TA. Employment, starting salaries, and educational indebtedness of 1985 graduates of US veterinary medical colleges. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1986;188:193–194.

2. Wise JK. Employment, starting salaries, and educational indebtedness of 1984 graduates of US veterinary medical colleges. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1984;185:909–910.

Table 4—1986 Educational debt of 649 US veterinary medical college graduates, by type of employment

Debt ($)	LAE	LAP	MA	SAP	SAE	EP	U	FG	MS	SLG	IC	AS	SE	Other
1 to 5,000	1	5	11	5	18	4	...	...	...	...	1	6	1	2
5,001 to 10,000	1	5	6	6	25	4	2	...	2	...	...	9	1	...
10,001 to 15,000	...	5	11	8	24	5	1	1	1	...	...	8	1	1
15,001 to 20,000	...	8	12	12	29	6	1	...	3	1	1	13	1	2
20,001 to 25,000	3	12	23	17	45	9	...	...	...	...	...	21	5	1
25,001 to 30,000	2	5	13	14	34	3	1	1	2	...	...	11	3	...
30,001 to 35,000	...	6	4	7	22	6	...	...	...	...	...	8	1	...
35,001 to 40,000	...	2	5	3	18	4	...	...	1	...	...	5	...	...
40,001 to 45,000	1	1	6	3	12	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
45,001 to 50,000	1	2	4	2	4	...	...	...	...	...	...	5	1	1
More than 50,000	...	2	2	3	8	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	2	...
Total	9	53	97	80	239	42	5	2	9	1	2	87	16	7
Average debt	$25,944	$23,165	$23,832	$24,331	$24,457	$22,304	$16,400	$22,500	$20,056	$19,900	$10,500	$23,435	$18,571	$29,643

LAE = Large animal exclusive; LAP = Large animal predominant; MA = Mixed animal; SAP = Small animal predominant; SAE = Small animal exclusive; EP = Equine predominant; U = University; FG = Federal government; MS = Military service; SLG = State/local government; IC = Industry/commercial; AS = Advanced study; SE = self-employed.